

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 075800

EXDIS TODEP 135

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM PHNOM PENH APR 21

QUOTE

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 3777

EXDIS

DEPT PASS SECDEF, AID, USIA, CINCPAC, EMB SAIGON,
BANGKOK, VIENTIANE, COMUSMACTHAI, USSAG/7 TH AF

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR, PINS, CB

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MANDATORY EVACUATION OF DEPENDENTS AND
REDUCTION OF STAFF IN PHNOM PENH

1. THE FALL YESTERDAY OF SIEM REAP, A VILLAGE ON ROUTE
2 ONLY TEN MILES SOUTH OF PHNOM PENH, HAS FOCUSED
OUR ATTENTION ONCE AGAIN ON THE APPARENTLY SPREADING
UNWILLINGNESS OF FANK SOLDIERS TO STAND UP TO ENEMY
FIRE. FOR WHATEVER CAUSES, THIS PHENOMENON HAS BEEN
REPEATEDLY AND INCREASINGLY NOTED OVER THE PAST TWO
MONTHS ON HIGHWAYS 1, 2, AND 3, ALONG THE SOUTHERN
MEKONG, AND MOST RECENTLY IN KEP. WHILE FANK CONTINUES
TO MAINTAIN NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY IN THE PHNOM PENH
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AREA AND HAS THE FIRE POWER FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE CAPITAL, WE CAN NO LONGER MAKE A RELIABLE ESTIMATE OF FANK WILLINGNESS TO DO SO, GIVEN ITS DETERIORATING MORALE AND PERFORMANCE. THE POSSIBILITY OF THE PERIODIC INTERDICTION OF POCHENTONG AIRPORT, THE REMAINING RELATIVELY RELIABLE LIFELINE TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, HAS NOW ALSO INCREASED AS ENEMY PROBES DRAW NEARER TO THE CAPITAL, ADDING TO THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE SITUATION. IN ANY POTENTIAL EMERGENCY, THE EMPLOYMENT OF US AIR POWER IN THE POPULATED URBAN PERIMETERS OF PHNOM PENH PRESENTS MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS THAN ELSEWHERE BECAUSE OF THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT. FINALLY, THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT OF SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE MILITARY AND SECURITY ENVIRONMENT OF PHNOM PENH OVER THE SHORT TERM NOR IN ITS SUPPLY- RELATED CRISES AFFECTING ELECTRICITY, WATER, AND CONSUMABLES.

2. AMONG FOREIGNERS, THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IS UNIQUELY VULNERABLE. WE ARE CONTINUINGLY REFERRED TO AS AN ENEMY IN NVA/ VC/ KHMER INSURGENT PROPAGANDA, AND OUR FURTHER IDENTIFICATION WITH THE RECENTLY INTENSIFIED AIR WAR HAS DOUBTLESS MAGNIFIED THE HOSTILITY TOWARDS US OF THE FORCES OPPOSING THE GKR. MEMBERS OF THE OFFICIAL US COMMUNITY IN PARTICULAR RISK BEING EITHER VICTIMS OR HOSTAGES SHOULD THERE BE A RAPID TURNABOUT IN THE SITUATION. WE ARE ALMOST ENTIRELY DEPENDENT FOR PROTECTION ON THE LOCAL GENDARMERIE OF UNCERTAIN RELIABILITY IN TIME OF CRISIS.

3. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLANNING IS WELL ADVANCED, WITH USSAG NOW RESPONSIBLE FOR PHASE TWO C-130 AIRLIFT AND PHASE THREE HELICOPTER LIFT. HOWEVER, THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH WE WOULD HAVE TO RESORT TO EMERGENCY EVACUATION, WITH CIVIL PANIC AND DISORDER POSSIBLY WIDESPREAD, SUGGESTS THAT A PRIOR EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO REDUCE PERSONNEL AT THE MISSION THROUGH PHASE ONE USE OF COMMERCIAL FACILITIES AND THE DEFENSE ATTACHE AIRCRAFT.

4. I THEREFORE PROPOSE AT ONCE (A) TO MAKE MANDATORY THE EVACUATION OF THOSE DEPENDENT WIVES REMAINING AT THE POST TO BANGKOK OR ANOTHER POINT OF THEIR CHOOSING DURING
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THE NEXT WEEK; (B) TO OFFER ALL SINGLE WOMEN EMPLOYEES

AND WORKING WIVES THE OPTION RPT OPTION OF EVACUATION;
AND (C) TO ASK ALL ELEMENTS OF THE MISSION, INCLUDING
THE MILITARY, TO DRAW UP LISTS OF LESS ESSENTIAL
PERSONNEL, WITH A VIEW TO THEIR PHASED DEPARTURE
WITHIN AN EARLY TIME FRAME, EITHER ON EVACUATION ORDERS
OR TRANSFER. IN THE CASE OF ECON AND MEDTC WE WILL
PROPOSE STATIONING LESS ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL IN BANGKOK
OR SAMAE SAN, THAILAND, WHERE THEY CAN STILL CONTRIBUTE
TO ON-GOING PROGRAMS HERE. PARTICULARS ON ALL MOVEMENTS
WILL BE COMMUNICATED SEPARATELY.

5. THESE ACTIONS MAY HAVE CONSIDERABLE IMPACT ON GKR
MORALE, EVEN IF DISCREETLY ADMINISTERED, SINCE THEY CANNOT
BE KEPT FROM THE OMNIPRESENT FOREIGN PRESS OR OUR LOCAL
STAFF. WE WILL SIMPLY HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT RISK. BUT
THERE COULD ALSO BE A SALUTARY IMPACT ON GKR LEADERS AND
THE FANK COMMAND IN DEMONSTRATING TO THEM THAT ONLY THEY
HAVE THE WHEREWITHAL, IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, TO DEFEND
THE CAPITAL AND THEMSELVES. THE UNFAVORABLE IMPACT
SHOULD ALSO BE MITIGATED BY THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF A
SIZEABLE MISSION HERE OF PROBABLY MORE THAN 100 US
PERSONNEL AND OVER 50 THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS. AT A
SUITABLE POINT, AND IN A MANNER CALCULATED TO INSPIRE
BETTER PERFORMANCE, WE WILL CANDIDLY INFORM GKR AND FANK
LEADERS OF OUR ACTIONS AND THE REASONS FOR THEM.

6. I AM PROCEEDING WITH THESE MEASURES TO TRIM DOWN
THE STAFF FOR WHAT WILL IN EFFECT BE LARGELY CRISIS
MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS AND ESSENTIAL AID AND MEDTC
OPERATIONS IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE COUNTRY TEAM,
ALL OF WHOM CONCUR THAT THE ACTIONS NOTED IN PARA FOUR
ARE NOW TIMELY. AS A CONCOMITANT TO THEM, AGENCIES
SHOULD INSTRUCT ALL PERSONS ASSIGNED OR ENROUTE TO
PHNOM PENH TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE MISSION BEFORE THEY
PROCEED. YOU MAY ALSO WISH TO CONSIDER A WARNING
NOTICE FOR ISSUE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC DISCOURAGING
TRAVEL TO CAMBODIA. PLEASE LET ME HAVE ANY COMMENTS
URGENTLY.

SWANK

UNQUOTE PORTER

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